DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 595 CG 024 213

AUTHOR Stamatakos, Louis C.
TITLE Student Development as Philosophy.
PUB DATE 19 Mar 91
NOTE 7p.; For related papers, see CG 024 414-416.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; Higher Education; Standards; *Student Development; *Student Personnel Services; *Student Personnel Workers

ABSTRACT

Ever since the publication of the Council of Student Personnel Associations in Higher Education (COSPA) of the Student Development Services in Post Secondary Education, arguments and debates have ensued as to whether this document: (1) was a statement of philosophy for student affairs; (2) was a philosophical replacement for the near-universally accepted Student Personnel Point of View (1949); (3) was to be accepted as a document in tandem with the Student Personnel Point of View working papers for the field; or (4) was not to be taken seriously as being in competition with the Student Personnel Point of View. As measured against the four basic components necessary for building a professional philosophy, student development cannot, in any way, be said to be a professional philosophy. To keep insisting that student development is philosophy is to swim against the current of our own evidence. Until such time that the inter-associational commitment and the wherewithall to forthrightly address the task of building a professional philosophy worthy of the name are developed, student development will have to take a back seat to the Student Personnel Point of View as representative of the field's basic philosophy. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Louis C. Stamatakos
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AS PHILOSOPHY

Louis C. Stamatakos
Michigan State University

ED 336595

(Paper delivered at a symposium presentation, "Professional Leadership in Thought and Practice: A Critique of Student Development", at the National Convention of the American College Personnel Association in Atlanta, Georgia on March 19, 1991).

Ever since the publication of the COSPA document in 1975, of Student Development Services in Post Secondary Education (COSPA, 1975), arguments and debates have ensued as to whether this document: (1) was a statement of philosophy for student affairs, (2) was a philosophical replacement for the near-universally accepted Student Personnel Point of View (1949) which for four decades had served as a philosophy, (3) was to be accepted as a document in tandem with the Student Personnel Point of View as working papers for the field, or (4) was, as some argued, 'old wine in new bottles', and not to be taken seriously as being in competition with the Student Personnel Point of View. (Appleton, Briggs, & Rhatigan, 1978).

To compound the problem, albeit not intentionally, NASPA's publication in 1987, of A Perspective on Student Affairs (NASPA, 1987) stirred up the hornet's nest once again through the claims of the uninformed that this was a statement of philosophy for the profession. This misinformed assertion completely ignored the intended audience for the NASPA document (college presidents and other officers in higher education administration), as well as ignored NASPA's disclaimer of the document as a statement of philosophy.

During the sixteen years since its dissemination, and despite thousands of illuminating as well as obfuscating words spent upon this matter, it appears as though we are no closer to consensus as to what statement or combination of statements our field cherishes as a philosophy. However, there is a general sense, I believe, that the Student Personnel Point of View (SSPV) still serves as the "basic" philosophical statement of the profession.

This melange of viewpoints has exerted a powerful influence upon the manner in which we perceive ourselves, our goals and our functions and activities in higher education. The unresolved controversy has resulted in all manner of difficulty, confusion and acrimony in the manner in which we have developed ethical standards (ACPA, 1989), standards for professional preparation and practice, and a commonality of perspective through which we carry out our day to day campus activities. In short, it is fair to say that we have been denied a Hagellan "zeitgeist" through which to put our entire house into a rational order because we have been disinclined to attempt to resolve the problem of what constitutes the philosophy and foundations of our profession.

In an attempt to determine whether or not student affairs actually possessed a professional philosophy, and if either the SPPV or the document, Student Development Services in Post Secondary Education (SDSPSE) served this purpose, my colleague Russell Rogers and I embarked upon such an investigation. We attempted to determine if either document, when examined against components for a professional philosophy, measured up to a sound statement of philosophy (Stamatakos & Rogers, 1985). A copy of that investigation was distributed to

CG024413

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

you at the doorway, and we hope that during your more leisurely moments, you will examine our criteria, findings and recommendations.

For our purposes today, we will look at the SDSPSE's record as measured against the established components of: Basic Premises, Values, Role and Functions, and Identity. These components were derived by Stamatakos and Rogers after a search of other professions' literature and hours of discussion with academic philosophers.

BASIC PREMISES

At the outset, we have to note that "Contrary to assertions that the SDSPSE builds on the basic premises of the SPPV..the SDSPSE only acknowledges the existence of the SPPV in its introduction" (Stamatakos & Rogers, 1985, 402).

The first component, a profession's basic premises, involves the identification and explanation of what the profession considers "first principles". In student affairs, these are derived from assumptions and hypotheses regarding three first principles or fundamental ingredients: institutions of higher education (their role and purpose), students (the nature of human beings), and the relationship between the two (the process of learning).

In this regard the student development document suffers significantly in that it near-totally ignores mission goals and roles of higher education in relation to its societal context and the expectations of society of its collegiate institutions and its graduates. According to student development, our work took on a primacy of its own apart from the context upon which rests its validity--the academic purpose of the university. Student development venerates the student to the exclusion of other institutional purposes and sees higher education only as a means to develop students who have unlimited potential and who are self-directed and who become self-fulfilled. The student becomes so through a lifelong context and interaction within collegiate institutions through which knowledge is explored and integration of experiences is to occur.

By omission or commission, student development ignores or finds unimportant the collegiate institution's responsibilities for preserving, transmitting and enriching the culture, creating new knowledge, or for educating students toward being responsible participants in society and contributing to its improvement. It has been observed that 'man is the measure of all life', and in this regard man's life takes on meaning and substance through rigorous choices of intellectual and moral values which lie in the core of the missions and societal relationships of collegiate institutions. To subordinate institutions and society in reverence to the individual student's self-fulfillment is, I believe, arrogance cloaked as humility. On a scale of 1-10, Student Development, in my opinion, earns about a 3 in responding to the first component of basic premises.

Profession's Values

The profession's second philosophical component, values, emanates from the first component even as it informs the first component (basic premises). Values evolve from basic premises and maintain basic premises. These values are derived from that which we hold to be a preferable state for the three basic premises -- institutions, students and learning.

In examining student development against the component of values, student development is again found seriously wanting. Not too surprisingly, it is deficient here for fundamentally the same reasons it was deficient in "basic premises". Student development sees higher education as serving as an environment for the individual to develop, while ignoring notions of institutional responsibility for contributing to society, to the fostering of democracy and democratic ideals or to international understanding. Nor does student development view students as sharing such responsibility with collegiate institutions, or accepting any such responsibility for themselves.

Editorially speaking, this pandering or appeal to the supremacy of the individual can definitely be traced to the rise of the cult of the individual, a dominate theme of the 1960's and early 1970's, and is one which seriously troubles our institutions and our profession to this day.

Student development education, if you will, values development exclusively as an end in itself rather than as a means to the achievement of desired ends greater than the individual and critical to the maintenance and improvement of the larger society. On a scale of 1-10, I would award student development a 5 in its response to values.

Profession's Role and Functions

A profession's role and functions, the third component, involves the identification and explanation of what it has done (history), what it is doing (present practice), and what it seeks to do (goals). It clarifies issues such as the scope of specialized roles, skills, competencies, knowledge, and performance standards that identify both the profession and its professionals. It encompasses statements of practice that are congruent with what the profession believes and values.

As observed in examining the first two criteria, once again student development does not measure up very well. It contains no mention of the profession's history, therefore, it cannot draw upon the values, traditions, richness and successes of its past. It provides for processes to be facilitated and outlines skills to be possessed, but it does not provide for functions to be performed and services to be provided. Student development fares better with regard to specific goals and attempts to be nonperscriptive and comprehensive. As well, it provides agendas for professional preparation. On a scale of 1 to 10, and with regard to roles and functions, we would give it a 6.5.

Identity

The fourth component is a profession's identity, and entails the culmination of a solid philosophy. It is the integration and well-developed congruence among what a profession believes, what it values, and what it does, and should result in clarity and integrity regarding what it is.

Student development's major weaknesses in regard to its identity, especially within the context of educational institutions, may be found in its view of its practitioners as student development specialists', suggesting a kind of clinical-psychological model of professional preparation as well as relationship to students. It advocates preparation and skills development in

the behavioral sciences but ignores education, pedagogy, and learning theory. This is an interesting irony in that as student development prizes educative roles and functions under the banner of "development", consultation, collaboration, counseling and administration, it ignores many of those essential learnings that are considered critical to successful educational practice. For example, knowledge of how students learn and the approaches, techniques, and procedures (pedagogy) which most effectively bring about desired learning.

Subtle, but important, is the underlying implication of the collaborator's role as an attempt to establish a status for the co-curriculum and the collaborator's instructional role as co-equal with that of the formal classroom and the instructional faculty. This implied goal runs contrary to the SPPV's belief of student affair's role as being in a support relationship to the academic mission of the college. As well, it is contrary to the perception and expectation of the faculty in higher education. Insofar as I am aware, if such a condition actually exists in American higher education today, it has to be in a distinct minority of less than three percent. On a scale of 1-10, student development, in my opinion, rates about a 5 in responding to the fourth component of identity.

In a number of our texts and publications over the past fifteen years a host of authors have contended that student development is a philosophy (Cooper, 1972; Rogers, 1990). However, in my judgement, the rationales and arguments presented in order to justify this advocacy or assertion, have been extremely weak, and, at best, have strained credulity.

During the sixteen years since the dissemination of the COSPA (1975) development statement, and despite thousands of illuminating as well as obfuscating words spent upon this matter, it appears as though we are no closer to consensus as to what statement or combination of statements our field cherishes as a philosophy.

However, there is a general sense, I believe, that the Student Personnel Point of View (SSPV) still serves as the "basic" philosophical statement of the profession since subject to the same analysis as the SDSPSE, it emerges as having better fulfilled the components of Basic Premises, Values, Role, Functions, and Identity. This is especially so in the manner in which the SPPV values and places into context basic purposes of higher education and students and their responsibilities to society. I acknowledge that we are dealing with a very thorny problem here when considering the dual relationship between individual and society -- one two hundred years old and between the rights-based philosophy of Locke, and the majoritarian beliefs of Rousseau. However, sensibility prevails in expecting at least an acknowledgment of the need for some balance between the two.

As measured against the four basic components necessary for building a professional philosophy, student development cannot, in any way, be said to be a professional philosophy. To keep insisting that student development is philosophy is to continue to swim against the current of our own evidence. Until such time that we develop the inter-associational commitment and wherewithall to forthrightly address the task of building a professional philosophy worthy of the name, student development will have to take a back

seat to the Student Personnel Point of View as representative of the field's basic philosophy.

Eugene Ionesco observed that "It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question." It is our hope that we have raised the right question about student development as a philosophy and that we have the courage to begin seeking the answer.

REFERENCES

American College Personnel Association (1989). A statement of ethical principles and standards, Washington, DC: Author.

American Council on Education (1949), The student personnel point of view, Washington, DC: Author.

Appleton, J.R., Briggs, C.M., & Rhatigan, J.J. (1978). Pieces of eight: The rites, roles and styles of the dean of eight who have been there. Portland, OR: NASPA Institute of Research and Development.

Cooper, A.C. (1972). Student Development services in higher education. Report from Commission on Professional Development. Council of Student Personnel Associations. Washington, DC: Council of Student Personnel Associations.

Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs (1986). CAS standards and guidelines for student service/development programs. College Park, MD: Consortium of Student Affairs Professional Organizations.

Council of Student Personnel Associations in Higher Education (1975). Student development services in post secondary education. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University.

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (1987). A perspective on student affairs. Washington, DC: Author.

Rogers, Robert F. (1990). Recent theories and research underlying student development. In Don G. Creamer (Ed.), College student development: Theory and practice for the 1990s (pp. 27-79). Alexandria, VA: American College Personnel Association.

Stamatakos, L.C. & Rogers, R.R. (1984). Student affairs: A profession in search of a philosophy, Journal of College Student Personnel, 25:5, 400-411.